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ABSTRACT

If children entering school today are to avoid a 12- to 20-year apprenticeship in alienation dominated by the mere manipulation of words and numbers, education must foster an appreciation for the roles the humanities play in helping mankind rise above the earthly and achieve a reflective overview of society. Such an appreciation can be obtained through the study of art and of the aural, tactile, and visual means by which artists share their experiences and world views. Through artistic modes of expression, students can examine the society and environmental orientations that bound their lives and, through an understanding of these boundaries, can advance to the state of the "unbounded self." In this state, the individual is free to develop inwardly as he or she wishes and to respond emotionally to life. To implement this personal exploration, a course which seeks to teach the humanities through the arts can include: (1) a comparison of literary works such as Loren Eiseley's "The Immense Journey," Davis' "The First Sex," or Persig's "Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance," which offer alternatives to triviality in the thought process: (2) interviews with practicing artists: and (3) the creation of a work of poetry, drama, or art. By giving tangible form to their feelings, students will achieve a greater sense of their identity and a greater understanding of others. (JP)

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"THE HUMANITIES THROUGH THE ARTS"

COMMUNITY COLLEGE HUMANITIES ASSOCIATION. EASTERN REGION

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In one of the most touching tales of all time, Le Petit Prince, Antoinne de St.Exupery has the pilot, who is gazing upon the still body of his young friend, state a simple truth, "What I see here is nothing but a shell. What is essential is invisible to the eye."

It is this essential - this essence which we try to give form, that we call "Inscape" ... a word coined by Gerard Manley Hopkins. Though I teach a course called Arts and Humanities and am chairman of the Fine Arts Division at Villa Julie College, I am basically a theatre person, and in selecting a name for our new theatre space a few years back, Inscape Theatre seemed appropriate--for what does theatre do more than give form to essence?

If one could make a final statement, a gem to leave to a captive audience of the world, what would it be? What really matters? In his play, The Chairs, Ionesco sets up such a situation. An older couple in a final ceremony invites a special personage to speak the words of wisdom, the message for which all their life-time friends have gathered. After much ritual the gentleman orator appears, opens his mouth to speak--silence follows. He is a deaf mute.

Was the orator a humanist who like John Cage gave us 45 minutes of silence as a message? The role of the humanities is to help man become more reflective - to lift him above the

earthly, above the immediate everyday problems which plague society and thinking, to put them into perspective so that he is able to see the forest rather than the tree.[1] The purpose of the humanities is to give man a sense of being part of a society, a world, to give him an understanding of the circumstances in which he has lived and may live.

This understanding is a moment of truth. Often it comes through direct encounter with a work of art. "Art," said Spinoza, "is with us that we may not perish from the truth." "Art is why we study, not the other way around."

In the Chinese Language the compound ideogram expresses it clearly. The character for word is and the character for man is . When these two picture concepts come together they form a new idea: faith, or to believe. . I like to think of the humanities as the word, and the arts as man, man creating; together they are an act of faith.

This is precisely why the humanities can be gleaned through the arts. In the humanities, conception dominates; whereas in the arts, perception dominates. First one must see before he can know.

S.J. Hayakawa said that the reorganization of our visual habits so that we perceive not isolated "things" in "space" but structure, order, and the relatedness of events in space-time, is perhaps the most profound kind of revolution possible - a revolution that is long overdue - not only in art but in

all experience.

"Both humanists and artists try to create order, both work to unify and harmonize the separate, jumbled pieces of their mental landscapes. At each moment of insight, the artist throws new light on old materials."[2] The artists give us a "distant early warning" says Rollo May, of what is happening to our culture. Our problem is: can we read the meaning aright?

Our children who enter school today face a twelve to twenty year apprenticeship in alienation. They learn to manipulate worlds of words and numbers, but rarely to experience the real world. They must learn to use and enjoy their senses - an education in the arts is an education of the senses.[3]

The humanities after all are concerned with the individual and especially with unique creations of the individual imagination which we may call works of art.[4] What then is the dividing line? In a working distinction between the arts and humanities, the N.E.H. said "The humanities are the family of knowledge that deals with what it has been - and is - to be humane, to make value judgements, to select the wiser course of action. Leonard Bernstein conducting the N.Y. Philharmonic in Beethoven's Fifth is the ARTS. The most distinguished music historian in the country talking about the VALUE of Beethoven as part of man's quest for understanding and solace is the HUMANITIES.

Delight and pleasure in the arts can arise from casual sensualism in the aural, tactile, or visual experiences they

evoke. But the knowledge of how the works which afford us these pleasures came into being, the understanding of the artists use of a medium in making a personal statement, and the sharing of that experience - these deepen and broaden our enjoyment of both the level of understanding and the level of feeling.

Man keeps asking himself, what is man? He does so because he knows consciously or unconsciously that man is not just in a state of becoming but rather in a state of being. "What, therefore is man, that thou art mindful of him?" In the forward to the text, Human Worth, a collection of literary works, photographs, and art put together by R.P. Janaro and D.E. Gearhart is this poem by Stephen Crane:

> "I saw a man pursuing the horizon;
> Round and round they sped.
> I was disturbed at this;
> I accosted the man."
> "It is futile." I said,
> "You can never----"
> "You lie," he cried,
> and ran on.

This is exactly what we in our arts and humanities course attempt to do in approaching the humanities through the arts. This humanistic collection of writings presents the overall theme of Human Worth and affirms the inherent value of existence. Thematically we investigate man through his orientations, boundaries and finally the unbounded self.

In Orientations we find a variety of attitudes on subjects such as education, and the sex roles and we explore the effect

these have on us through artists past and present, eastern and western.

In Boundaries we have the opportunity to consider whether it is power, money, and status that determine human worth; whether it is the capacity for being disciplined, or the capacity for rejecting or changing the system that seeks to control us; and whether we derive worth from civilization and culture, or from living the natural life. In the final section The Unbounded Self the reader explores the possibility that, no matter what happens to us in society, we are free to develop inwardly as we wish, free to pursue the rational life or to attempt to go beyond that into unchartered areas of consciousness; and finally, free to respond emotionally to life as we will.[5]

The possible meanings of human worth lie not only in the ideas but in their modes of expression... essay, poetry, plays, short stories, paintings, photography, architecture, film, explored also in museums, theatres, concert halls. We allow the falling snow to settle on the bending branch and then as in Zen and the Art of Archery when it is ready to slip of its own accord it does so - the branch springs to life erect with renewed energy.

Three projects have been designed to help implement this exploration: (a) the comparison of literary works which offer alternatives to triviality in thought process; work such as Loren Eiseley's The Immense Journey, Toffler's Future Shock,

Henri's The Art Spirit, Davis' The First Sex, Persig's Zen and The Art of Motorcycle Maintenance, Turnbull's The Forest People and Mountain People, (b) the interviewing of a practicing artist, (c) the creation of a work in one of the arts.

One year we took the theme "A Look at the Father" and produced three plays in the theatre department: "Look Homeward Angel," an original piece,"About Women and Sometimes Men," and "The Remarkable Mr. Pennypacker" which dealt humorously with the concept of a bigamist. The Maryland Committee for the Humanities presented us with a grant to have discussions with humanists after the show with the audience. The issues were presented in an art form and then reflected upon by a philosopher, a psychologist, a sociologist, a religionist, and a lawyer who was handling a similar case in North Dakota. Another time we did Robert Ardrey's play Thunder Rock at the Baltimore Inner Harbor with a discussion of his whole concept of isolationism, also with humanists present.

However for me, the highlight of our program and the uniqueness of it comes with field work when we work in agencies that deal with some form of handicap, or other than "norm," i.e., schools for blind, deaf, retarded, delinquent, disturbed, or alternative approaches to education.

The student at this point has examined his own orientations both through the artists which revealed values and the humanists which reflected upon the values. He has also viewed his own boundaries, again through poetry, philosophy, theatre and art.

At this point he goes to work with people having unusual ORIENTATIONS AND BOUNDARIES and brings to the situation an artist's perceptivity as well as the humanist's reflective ability. He begins to synthesize, to see and understand changing values; what substitutes were sought, and what new goals were set. Upon his return he shares the experience to find values in common. The perspectives this situation presents are formidable and prepares the searcher to attack the third segment, THE UNBOUNDED SELF, in which both the rational realm and 'beyond reason' are explored. The inter-weaving of the perceptive and conceptual aspects of the arts and humanities finally gives way to a creative project, a statement of reflective growth, or a truly UNBOUNDED look at the humanities through arts. This is an invaluable function, that of clarification - for value decisions - an enlightening relevance.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn in accepting the Nobel prize said, "The one and only substitute for experience which we have NOT had ourselves is ART.... art communicates the whole burden, the life-long experience of another being. I wish to call urgent attention to this great and blessed faculty of art."

Is it possible for two different people to have two different meanings for the same situation and both be right? As Lammenais said, "Everyone looks at what I look at but no one sees what I see." The way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe - we are always looking at relationships between things and ourselves.[6] Therefore, we are re-

arranging or transforming evidence in such a way that we are able to go beyond.[7] We reassemble evidence to make new insights. We feel (art), we think, judge, analyze and evaluate with each encounter, and with each encounter our minds expand, our sympathies deepen and the experience of art is no longer separate from ourselves. As Rilke puts it "the art is turned to blood within us."[8]

Jacob Bronowski has said that the mind spends a long time digesting the available material; the act of creation is an act of finding the right order to express the whole complexity - finding order in what was disorderly.

Thus we see that vision is a marvelous way of becoming aware. Awareness is the first order of harmony. Awareness precedes creativity. We have spoken of art and of drama. Allegra Buckminster Fuller (Bucky's daughter) suggests that the motion of dance which originated as communication devices (hunter to gatherer from the mountaintop to the valley in large movements) finally became obsolete as signals, but continued as part of the ritual life of a community. (salvation) The distillation of ideas then becomes a focus in studying the abstract movements of the dance form.

"Also, it was no coincidence that Einstein played the violin, for 'time' as a fourth dimension is no abstraction to a musician, but rather an infinite, living, pulsating continuance"... Yehudi Menuhin in Arts and the Man discusses the relevance of the awarenesses in life forces. Only musical sound can communicate the intangible, the yearnings, aspirations,

the sensation and mood of life. Sound can penetrate more deeply our subconscious, can more profoundly affect our emotions than any other impression. Man's ultimate 'leap' when approaching his God is through music. Can this cosmic happening become computerized? Can the human element be removed? Can we work with the sequential order in music and not the parallel hemisphere of the bicameral mind?

A distillation is the essence of a thing: it is more pure and more potent. Distillation is not imagination. It is the opposite. Distillation strips the scene. Imagination clothes it. A distillation is of the artist, dancer, musician. The audience must bring the imagination. The humanities thus brings imagination to the distillations of the artist.[9] Beneath the stereotype waits the original. It is a matter of discovering the extra-ordinary where the ordinary may appear to the undiscerning. Great art is the transformation of common things.[10] It is this transformation and these originals that we work toward and recognize.

Another significant factor is the influence of people who don't necessarily mean to influence us. Albert Schweitzer in Memoirs of Childhood and Youth said, "So many people entered my life as a child and became powers within me. I think that we all live spiritually by what others have given us in the significant hours of our lives. These significant hours do not announce themselves as coming but arrive unexpected, just as a piece of music often strikes us. I do not believe we

can put into anyone ideas which are not in them already. Much of this tinder catches fire only when it meets some flame or spark from outside."

And yet what numbers of people close themselves off so as not to be influenced! That is real fear - fear not of others but of oneself. Fear of losing one's "me."

An influence is a meeting. One cannot be influenced except by what one already possesses in oneself. Better than a meeting, a recognition. "We could not be influenced by something completely foreign," said Jean Louis Barrault, the French actor-regisseur. The art then becomes the accelerated revelation which the humanities help us to recognize.

Influences are effects of change which reveal us to ourselves. We were carrying the thing in us but at the embryonic stage. Now we meet it fulfilled. What a leap forward!! How then do we nurture this deep unconscious impulse once we've discovered it?

Art (at its best) reaches from inwardness to inwardness, and it lifts, widens, and deepens the range and veracity of communication.[11]

Plotinus claimed that external objects present us only with appearances... the region of truth is not to be investigated as a thing external to us - it is within us. Here the objects we contemplate and that which contemplates are identical - both are thought. Reason sees in itself that which is above itself and its source. It is the scientific eye of actuality

and the illumined eye of imagination. (Lewis Mumford)

So, to give tangible form to that which is inward, to represent it in such a way that we see it as the outward image of inward things - that is a most rare power... to recreate the external in external form is within the power of many.[12]

"Hundreds of people can talk for one who can think, but thousands can think for one who can see."[13]

It seems to me that the individual moves toward <u>being</u> knowingly and acceptingly, the process which he inwardly and actually is. He moves away from what he is not, from being a facade.[14]

With each art experience, each recognition, there is an ascent of energy, a sensation of souring, and expansion of consciousness. However, as energy goes up it MUST also fall. The fall should not be interpreted negatively. It is a grounding.[15] ~~Before~~ The humanities ground us. What is essential is invisible to the eye.

INSCAPE.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Fontaine M. Belford - "The Humanities, How Important Are They?" (Humanities & Public Policy, Vol. 2, No. 4, Jan./Feb. 1978, p. 4)

[2]D.G. Kehl - "Poetry and The Visual Arts." (Belmont, CA., Wadsworth Publishing Co. 1975)

[3]Rudolph Arnheim, "Visual Thinking." (Berkley, 1974)

[4]Frank Willett, African Arts and the Future.

[5]R. Paul Janaro and Darwin E. Gearhart, Human Worth, (New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973).

[6]John Berger, Ways of Seeing. (London: Penguin, 1980.

[7]Jerome Bruner, Definition of Discovery.

[8]D.G. Kehl - "Poetry and The Visual Arts." (Belmont, CA., Wadsworth Publishing Co. 1975)

[9]Nancy Reinert, "Distillation of Ideas." (C.S.M., 5/23/78, p. 25)

[10]Godfrey John, "Art as Transformation." (C.S.M. 11/25/75)

[11]Louis Chapin, "Don't Let War Cries Silence The Arts." (C.S. Monitor, 4/23/80, p. 22)

[12]Jacob Burckhardt, Reflections on History, (London, 1943, p. 179)

[13]John Ruskin, Modern Painters.

[14]Carl Rogers, "On Becoming a Person."

[15]Robert Hargrove, "Communion to Community" (from Matmeya)

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